



## Biarchy as the Social System of Boti Indigenous Community whose Adhere Nusantara Religion

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### **Abstract**

For indigenous community which commonly categorized as traditional, Boti has implemented gender equality. Works division are based on ability and interest. Not by gender. Also, they refuse to use the force even to the children. It is part of Boti basic perspective on their custom rules which is resourced on indigenous religion of Nusantara religion named *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* means God who rules the sky and nature. Women can express and actualize themselves as equal as men in education, religion, social, cultural, economic and politic. Moreover, for the adherents of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*, the top leaders of any decision are a man that is *Ama Usif<sup>1</sup>* or The King Father and a woman that is *Ena<sup>2</sup>* or Mama. The doctrine of their religion about gender equality is implemented in the daily lives in household affairs too. How is gender equality implemented in Boti indigenous community? And, how is the role of their Nusantara Religion on this issue? Using ethnography as the method of field research by living at Boti indigenous village for 13 months from October 2, 2021 until November 1, 2022, and decolonization perspective with inter religious study framework, this article would explore the answers of those two questions. Mansour Fakihi's theory on gender transformation will be used as the foundation to explain the implementation of gender equality in Boti indigenous community.

**Keywords:** *Biarchy, Boti; Gender Equality; Nusantara Religion; Indigenous Community*

### **Introduction**

When got into Boti indigenous village at the first time in the beginning of October 2021, I brought outsiders' perceptions. Boti is one of original indigenous community in Indonesia located at Kie sub-district of South Timor Tengah district, East Nusa Tenggara<sup>3</sup> province. As mostly NTT area, Boti is also lack of water with extra hot weather. There is a common idiom from NTT people said that there are 9 suns in NTT as the way to describe how hot the weather there. However, Boti is very green. The indigenous people foster their land successfully. The most interesting thing of Boti indigenous village is

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<sup>1</sup> Dawan language, *Ama* means Father and *Usif* means The King.

<sup>2</sup> Dawan language.

<sup>3</sup> East Nusa Tenggara is Nusa Tenggara Timor in Indonesian and usually abbreviate as NTT.

some citizens are still the adherent of Nusantara religion as what their ancestors taught. And based on their ancestors taught they implement biarchy system where men and women have equal position, rights, voices in daily activities and in determining the future of Boti which is also involving politic field.

After living for 13 months, the early findings of this research are the missed understanding of two commonly accepted terms about Boti. First is about the division of Boti community into inner and outer Boti. Second is the name of Nusantara religion of Boti people which is commonly mentioned as *Halaika*. Before discussed the gender equality system in Boti, it is important to clarify these two missed commonly accepted terms in order to see Boti indigenous community as one solid substance regardless their religions. Otherwise, by doing these clarifications, it can be understood how Boti indigenous people able to voice their critical understanding about themselves. They have no hesitate to talk the truly of theirs to other people including the outsiders. It makes this research were becoming more interesting for getting a lot of valid data and information.

For the second term; the named of Boti religion; already confirmed by *Ama Usif* (The King Father) in the end of February 2018 when I came for the first time in a very short time at Boti. *Ama Usif* refused their religion to be named as *Halaika* since the meaning of *Halaika* is those who don't believe in God while their truly religion teaches them to believe in God that is explained as the highest and greatest one who rules this world. Meanwhile, the first term about the division of Boti community is clarified in the first quarter of this research period.

Partially, there are some people who do not mind with this division as the method to describe Boti community which is consisted of those who adhere the state religions<sup>4</sup> and the belief in One God<sup>5</sup>. Boti people who adhere "*Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*" which is mentioned as Belief in One God on the Religion State legal system are classified as Inner Boti while those who adhere state religions are included as Outer Boti. This division is purely to simplify the classification of Boti community based on their religions. The adherents of Christian and Catholic are categorized as outer Boti. While the adherents of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* which is actually one of thousand religions existed in Nusantara<sup>6</sup> before state religions came into Indonesia are classified as inner Boti citizens.

Based on geography condition, the adherents of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* are spread in 3 household associations; Oebesak, Oepliki and Oetilo. Those 3 household associations are included in Boti sub-village. There are another household association in Boti sub-village named Pnite and located between Oebesak and Oepliki. All members of Pnite are Christian. So, the three household associations which are inhabited by the adherents of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* are not centralized in one location. Besides that, after many conversations with Boti people from various religions, genders, ages (elder, parents, youths) and domiciles, they actually disagree with this separation. They said, "We come from one family. No matter what is our religions, we are still one family. So, there is no Inner and Outer Boti. We are Boti". By this finding, this research uses the terminology as Boti people will; there is no division for Boti community except mention it as Boti as one community.

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<sup>4</sup> The State Religions are the religions legally admitted by Indonesia government. There are 6 religions; Islam, Christian, Catholic, Buddha, Hindu, and Confusianism. In Boti village, there are two state religions; Christian as the majority and Catholic as the very minority.

<sup>5</sup> The original religion of Boti people named "*Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*" which is part as Nusantara Religion in this paper hasn't legalized as religion and is still categorized as Belief in One God. Belief in One God also able to implement their religious activities as protected by the state laws. Commonly, this local religion is called tribe religion in Timor island. The adherents of *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* places the second majority in Boti village which have 68 households based on Boti village government data of 2020.

<sup>6</sup> By this and next, *Uis Neno ma Uis Pah* is also metioned as Nusantara Religions in this paper.

## Methods

This resource of this research is Boti indigenous community at Kie sub-district, South Timor Tengah district of East Nusa Tenggara province in Indonesia. Boti is one of genuine tribe in Indonesia that's lived at Timor island or previously known as small Sunda. It never touched by any colonialism which were ever ruling in Indonesia, such as: Portuguese, Netherland and Japan. Boti started to be visited by foreigner in 1985 for tourism.

In order to understand the soft construction of Boti indigenous community as the foundation of their way of life, this research implemented ethnography method for the field research. There are many rites and thought of indigenous community which cannot be accessed by outsiders. It needs trust which might be developed by closed and routine interaction. Besides, there are many value knowledges which are frequently not formulated and internalized through daily activities, habits, routine works. Ethnography enable researcher lived blending and joint their daily activity, so able to catch up, get and understand the unformulated and unspoken knowledge as their wisdom of life.

To strengthen the mindset of researcher so able to get the comprehensive data, this research used decolonization methodology as the perspective. By this perspective, researcher did not post as outsider with a bunch construction of knowledge, but more as an outsider who study from Boti indigenous community. This position places Boti indigenous community as the resource of the knowledge for this research. Otherwise, decolonization methodology becomes the guide of awareness for the researcher in absorb the knowledge, doing the conversation and discussion with the people, observation and even act in their daily live.

The analyzing of result in gender issue, this research uses gender transformation theory from Mansour Fakhri which discussed gender equality in order to achieve gender balance of men and women. This theory is appropriate to understand the biarchy concept as the social system of Boti indigenous community.

## Livelihood of Boti Community



Picture 1: The girls spinning yarn at *Lopo Sonaf* (Dawan, hall of palace) on *Neon Tokos* or Rest Day  
Photo by: Octalyna Puspa Wardany at *Sonaf Boti* on October 3, 2021

Boti community is the farmer community who are implemented dried field farming and non-cage livestock system. Men and women do agriculture and caring the livestock. Both genders also do the household works, such as cleaning, cooking, meet the guesses. As part of the community, men and women are involved in all social activities, such as join the government meeting, fulfilling party invitation, contribute in the group works in doing the plantation or preparing the party, etc.

For agriculture, they depend on the rain to irrigate their field that is every November or December until April of the next year. Their main plants are corn as their staple food. However, Boti youth generations nowadays are prefer rice which still cannot fulfill their needs because the production is very low regarding on their dried land condition and no irrigation system. Peanut and pumpkin are also planted with corn seed. So, those three seeds; corn, peanut and pumpkin; are put in one hole when planting.



Picture 2: Corn, peanut and pumpkin seeds plant together in the hole  
Photo by: Octalyna Puspa Wardany at head of village's dry field on December 11, 2021

There are many restrictions during the plantation period (December – April) which are formulated as part of culture<sup>7</sup>. Those forbidden are not allowed to eat young corn, peanuts and pumpkins; to cut bamboos and certain trees to hold the wind which usually strong during the rainy season so those trees could preserve the plants for not getting ruin by the wind; eating areca fruit; eating long beans. Some of those forbidden are still implemented in the area non-Nusantara religions adherent in various combination and especially the forbidden to cut certain trees. Boti community also plant vegetables for daily consumption. As commodity plants, they sell sour fruits every August – December which selling price is 5–15 thousand/Kg and candlenut in October – February which is 25-30 thousand/Kg.

For the livestock, every household has chickens, pigs and goats. While for the cows, not all households have them. Beside for customary ceremony or celebration and party, the livestock of pigs, goats and cows are the reserved fund for emergency needs, such as education costs, build or repairing the

<sup>7</sup> The restrictions are implemented differently in 4 sub-villages. The whole restrictions are applied strictly by the adherents of Nusantara Religions because those are part of the ancestors' taught.

house, buy the vehicles. Chickens are for certain consumption in celebration or party and guest treat. The price for cow is about IDR 8-10 million, goat is IDR 800 thousand – 1,5 million and pig is IDR 1-1,5 million. To get other type of foods, they buy from outside. There is local market which is opened once a week, every Friday. In this market, Boti people sell their commodities; plants, livestock, weaving products, cakes, battle nut and areca; and buy their needs which cannot self-produce, such as rice, salt, clothes, etc.

Boti people adhere their ancestors believed named “*La Lulik Uis Neno ma Uis Pah*” means people who adhere God as the heaven sovereignty and the nature. In 1968, as the impact of Gestok of September 30, 1965<sup>8</sup>, Boti people was starting to adhere one of religions admitted by the state<sup>9</sup>. Timor island was commonly known as part of BTI (Barisan Tani Indonesia or Indonesia Farmers Line), one organization as part of PKI<sup>10</sup>. Though Boti village had never involved with PKI, the situation at that time was very frightening. There is the main common logical since PKI is communists whose no religions or atheist, the people whose were not adhere one of state admitted religions concluded as have no religion and so were communist and part of PKI. Then, those people were legally cached to be put on trial or worse died. This rumor was spread all over Indonesia including Timor Island. This frightening condition became real for Boti since there was a soldier came to the village in 1968<sup>11</sup>. When he came, there was a gathering event in *Sonaf*<sup>12</sup>. The king and all people in the *Sonaf* then forced to go down to the field<sup>13</sup> in the middle of the day. They were sitting on the land field, dried during the hot midday until evening. That soldier was unknown where he came from and didn’t showed any official warrant or mentioned his troop or commandant who ordered him to force people to be dried under the sun. He also smacked some people including the King and cut the long hair of the males which is actually part of their identity as the adultery symbol and taught by their ancestors to be maintained. The King then delegated 3 villagers to the army office in Kupang to get information and gave report about this incident. That unknown and unofficial soldier was then taking care by Kupang office. Meanwhile, Boti King and his guards was managing the clarification process for Boti people as not involving in Gestok.

There were two major state religions in Timor island; Christian and Catholic. Both are invited by the King to come into Boti village in 1965. Boti King even gave certain locations to build the church for Christian and Catholic adherents. To study Catholic, Boti King delegated 3 persons to Oenlasi, neighbor village, as the nearest center of Catholic in that area. It was approved for Boti people to build a Chapel. Since its first existing, there were many Boti villagers joint into Catholic. Moreover, the King was willing to joint some masses at the beginning. During its progress, the adherents have decreased. Nowadays, there are 14 households as Catholic adherents which is positioning Catholic as the third population in Boti village.

Beside the delegation from the King, Boti people were learning Christian independently to Oennai in 1965<sup>14</sup>. Firstly, they used a house to be the place doing weekly gathering at Boti subvillage.

<sup>8</sup> *Gerakan September 1965* (September 1965 Movement) which has been mentioned as the coup d’etat movement by PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia or Indonesian Communist Party) as the biggest party at that time.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Nikolas Sae, Catholic Teacher at Boti Chapel on November 28, 2021 and Oktofianus Benu on November 08, 2021, also FGD with Representative, Elders and *Diacon* of Christian church GMIT Bet’el of Nuntio Subvillage, Boti village on March 5, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> FGD with Representative, Elders and *Diacon* of Christian church GMIT Bet’el of Nuntio Subvillage, Boti village on March 5, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Nikolas Sae, Catholic Teacher at Boti Chapel on November 28, 2021 and Oktofianus Benu on November 08, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> *Sonaf* is palace in Dawan language as original language of Boti village.

<sup>13</sup> The location of the field nowadays becomes the office of village government distance about 750m from *Sonaf*.

<sup>14</sup> Boti people felt more comfort to study Christian in Oennai because the history background. Boti is part of Amanuban Kingdom in Timor island, same as Oennai. While Oennasi was part of Amanatun Kingdom and the enemy of Amanuban. At that year, the war between Amanatun and Amanuban were still happened. If people from Amanuban, including Boti people, crossed the

The adherents were growing in short time, especially forced by the unknown and unofficial soldier incident. Then, the first Christian church was built at Nambaun Subvillage. Few people from Nuntio subvillage, about 6 households, initiated to build their own weekly gathering and learnt to Oennai directly because their location is quite far from Nambaun subvillage and nearer to Oennai. Christian then able to grow fast and now it becomes the first population in Boti village that has 5 *mata jemaat* with 5 churches and already being 1 independently church for Boti village. By this history and recently condition, religion becomes one important part in Boti village which is especially representative by the Christian adherents as the majority adherents.

### Three Stoves System

Boti has 3 stoves system<sup>15</sup>. Those are tradition, religion and government. It is tradition as the beginning of Boti village. This village was established by a group of people who were developed new kampong. They then decided a king as the leader and to carry on the new kampong. As time goes by, they have grown and reproduced. Many outsiders came to be part of this kampong by the permission from the king.

During Portuguese colonialism in Indonesia started in 15<sup>th</sup> century, Boti hadn't touched at all because its location is very far from city and difficult to be accessed. However, there was an agreement that every month Boti should deliver their farming results, such as corn, egg, chicken, banana, cassava, to Portuguese at Niki-niki, the shortest small town from Boti village where representative of Portuguese governed. The Portuguese gave little money and other things to Boti as the gratitude. This agreement was continuing to Dutch colonialism era in 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century and Japan era for 3,5 years. By this agreement, Portuguese, Dutch and Japan was never stepped on their feet to the village<sup>16</sup>. Besides that, Boti developed certain protection covering all village area. So, when any enemy steps on the border of their village from any direction, they cannot attack Boti. This protection is still functioning until nowadays<sup>17</sup>. It is known famously in Timor island that only those who have good will are able to get into the village, especially entering the *Sonaf* (Dawan, palace).

When Indonesian declared the independence in August 17, 1945; Boti King stated as part of Indonesia. As part of Indonesia state, Boti kingdom then transformed to be village. Village government was developed as the real representative of state government. The head of village government is elected every 5 years and only allowed to govern for 2 periods. Though Boti people implements gender equality, from time to time, head of village are still males. The wife of the head of village then roles the village economic organization of BUMDes<sup>18</sup> and PKK<sup>19</sup>. However, Boti people is never forbidden any woman to be village head and the women in Boti are never thought that the position is impossible for them. State which is represented by village government with its head is one stove in Boti politic and society system.

The other stove is religion. For Boti village which Christian is as the majority with total adherents 1,883<sup>20</sup> persons, it is represented by the GMIT<sup>21</sup> church with its preacher. As GMIT classis system, there

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Amanatun area means doing the invasion so they can be killed. By this reason, Boti people were more like to go to Oennai as the same Amanuban to learn religion and the Oennai people have adhered Christian.

<sup>15</sup> FGD with Soleh Benu, Lakak Misak, Tui Neomlaka at Oepliki on December 19, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Nikolas Sae, Catholic Teacher at Boti Chapel on November 28, 2021 and Heka Benu, little brother of late former King (Nune Benu) at his house in Boti on May 8, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Heka Benu, little brother of late former King (Nune Benu) at his house in Boti on May 8, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> BUMDes is abbreviation of Badan Usaha Milik Desa or Economic Organization owned by Village. At Boti, BUMDes primarily is organized household's production done by women, such as weaving, whickering and cooking cakes for selling. BUMDes also rent chairs and tents for gathering or party and cutting trees service using jackdaw for woods resuting.

<sup>19</sup> Organization for mothers which is empowering women with skills on weaving, whickering, cooking, caring the house to be clean and health, etc.

<sup>20</sup> Data Potensi Desa Boti tahun 2019 or Boti Village Potency Data of 2019.

is certain period for a preacher charged in Boti village, that is 3 years<sup>22</sup>. The preacher can be male or female, but mostly in Boti is female preacher. Though religion and church does not involve in the politic, the power of it cannot be ignore due to its number of adherents.

The third stove is actually the root of Boti village, that is *adat* or custom/tradition. *Adat* already sublimes into Boti people daily live. It exists in religion and village government as two other stoves of Boti. However, the foundation of *Adat* actually is the adherents of Nusantara Religion. Those adherents are also the guard for the sustainability of *Adat*. For the organization, *Adat* represents by the *Sonaf* (Dawan, palace) and rules by *Ama Usif* (Dawan, The King Father) and *Ena* (Dawan, Mama). These two roles stand equally in every fields of live, have the same voice and rights in taking any decision related to Boti village and people especially the adherents of Boti Nusantara Religion. The implementation of gender equality in Boti custom community will be discussed detail next.

### Gender Relation in Daily Life

Daily life is a public and private space for men and women do the interaction simultaneously. It is a space that shows the real and habitual activities naturally. It can represent the cultural construction of certain community. So, it will be a good space to be observed comprehensively in order to catch when, where, by who, how and what kind of domination is happened.

There is a clear taught for household management “Husband and wife should respect each other. If husband tell something, wife should follow. When wife tell something, husband should obey. So, there is no argue in the household live”<sup>23</sup>. For instance, in the middle December 2021, there was an incident. A goat of Liu Nomleni’s family died after bitten by the dog because entering the yard of Christian church. As Boti custom, this incident should be discussed by every part whom is involved. For this case, Liu Nomleni family as the owner of the death goat and the preacher as the owner of the dog who manages the church area. When each part met, Nomleni family was not merely represented by Mr. Liu Nomleni. He took his wife too to that meeting. While from the church part, the female preacher attended by herself because she’s still single.

There is also other important matter. In October 2022, there were some people gathered for doing a group work to build Liu Sae’s house. Liu Sae is a daughter of Mr. Sae who has no spouse yet. She wants to have a house in the form of *Lopo*<sup>24</sup>. Some men and women were getting work together for few days until *Lopo* is fix. This Liu Sae’s *Lopo* building is showed that women are able to have a house too regardless her condition (single, married, or widow). And, other community members always be ready to help in building work regardless their gender (men or women). They work together based on their competence.

The thought of equality of women and men in family is implemented in all part of live of household. By this taught, women and men have equal position in managing their household. The children obey and honor both of their parents equally without any perspective that father is higher than mother. This taught gives the understanding for every household business must be taken care by both father and mother. As the implication, there is no job division based on gender in household. Each work can be done by any person depends on its load, the ability and interest of the person, and safety.

<sup>21</sup> GMIT is Gereja Masehi Injili Timor or Protestant Evangelical Church in Timor. This is the Christian church roles in Timor and Rote island of East Nusa Tenggara province.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mike, the preacher of GMIT at Boti period July 2020 – June 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Liu Nomleni, The Head of Neighborhood Association No. 1 and the adherent of Boti Nusantara Religion, November 28, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Boti has 3 types of house. Those are *Ume Kebubu* of circle house which is use for cooking, storing food stocks, sleeping for mother and baby; *Lopo* is the gathering open house; and square house.

As a farming community, both women and men work in the field to prepare the land for plantation, plant the seeds, take care the plants and do harvest<sup>25</sup>. Opening the new field is mostly involving men because the load and working condition at the field. Moreover if the field location is very far from the habitation. Boti people use to walk to any destination. In opening new field, the main works to do are cutting the trees, burn the weeds and manage the fire for not burning outside the new field location. These works do for several days from early morning, around 5 or 6 am, until evening around 6 or 7 pm. It is also possible they should stay for few days in the field to accomplish the works. They work under hot weather since the sun rise which is extra hot like burning the earth. A good and strong physical condition is needed to do the works in the open area for opening the new field. However, some women can be joined this work too. So, it is not forbidden for women or restricted merely for men.

In livestock, Boti implement indulgence cattle system, so they can get their own food and breed. For certain purpose, such as selling or preparing livestock for ceremony, livestock like cows, pigs and goats, will be put in the cage. Due to that condition, women and men then manage their stocks and give foods. They take the leaves from the field or people forest in order to feed goats and cows or preparing food for pigs in the cage. By the indulgence cattle system, it is not surprising that sometime the livestock are died because of being attacked by animals and it is not rare the baby livestock lost its mother. In this condition, the baby livestock then take care by the owner in their house yard. They will be released after getting adult and able to get food by themselves.



Picture 3: A man cooking coconut milk in order to produce coconut oil  
Photo by: Octalynda Puspa Wardany at Sonaf Boti on December 23, 2021

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Soleh Benu, the Meo of Ama Usif (Dawan, Commander) the adherent of Boti Nusantara Religion, November 27, 2021.



Women and men can work in the kitchen too. Men do cook and producing coconut oil. In ceremonial events; marriage, birth, death; men and women, kids and adults are worked together in preparing foods and other things for ceremony. It is also common for the people whose fields are very far to stay some days in the field when they work for plantation. In this situation, men who should stay to manage the field have to cook by themselves. So, women and men have the same chance to do the works in domestic site.

In every name, there is family name as the last name of Boti people. The unique for Boti people, women's family name are not changed, either adopt their husband's family name automatically after marry. Women's keep using their family name. Husband's family name is given to their children name as part of husband's responsibility for their children's live. The children, boys and girls are educated to do various works in the households without any gender bias. So, boys know the works in domestic area including kitchen as well as girls know how to manage the field and livestock.

Though from family name it can be just Boti applied patrilineal system, but it does not follow that rule totally. Marriage does not make women have to follow their husband especially the marriage between Boti people with outside village. It depends on the agreement of the spouse. It is not rare for a man from outside to become Boti people after marriage Boti woman. It is also possible for Boti man live outside the village after marriage with woman from another village. However, mostly people from outside will follow to stay at Boti after marriage Boti people.

Boti people, especially for the adherents of Nusantara Religion apply monogamy. A man or woman is able to marriage again if their spouse is passed. By this rule, woman is really acted respectful. Boti people are also believed that mate cannot be forced as well as marriage. It is not surprising for women and men stay single. There is no social judgment which value those condition as inability to have spouse and no force from society or even their family that push them to get marry soon. As the impact, the society take care very well those women who stay single. Their safety is guarantee. Moreover, they can express and actualize themselves for any role and work in economy, social, cultural and religion. For those who stay single; not married or being widowed/widower; society always ready to help them for manage their fields in the plantation season whenever they ask for helps.

Women have the right and freedom to give their voice in election without any force from men. Women can give their disagreement on political decision of village management and future though men already approved it. For instance, in a discussion on December 13, 2021 about the planning for Boti to legalize their status as the Custom Village, *Ama Usif* agree that plan and would like to know every progress. At that time, discussion was held with *Ama Usif* and one *Meo* (Dawan, commander). Two days after that, *Ena* stated her disapproval for that planning. She did not want the transformation to be custom village then change Boti and give bad effect and impact for Boti people in the future. The disagreement from *Ena* cannot be rejected or ignored. She represents women voices of Boti indigenous community and that voice was absolutely their right for decide their future. The fact of *Ena* express the women voice shows women able to voices their ideas and it is daily happened. And, without *Ena's* approval the planning and any works to realize Boti as legal custom village cannot be done. Then, what should be cleared is the cause of that disagreement. After discussion all things about custom village, *Ena* then understand that this transformation is for their better future since the legal custom village gives more space and authority for custom and indigenous community to manage their village by placing the indigenous community of Boti people as the main role and decision maker for every arrangement in Boti.

Other incident was about the approval of village electricity installment. The officers from State Electricity Company already came to the village on April 8, 2022. When they ask permission to *Sonaf* for that development, *Ama Usif* and *Ena* refused the installment. They don't want the installment to be implemented by cutting the trees because the geographical condition of Boti village which its land is easily to erosion. After knowing no trees to be cut for the electricity installation, the installment can be

continued. In this incident, both man and woman voice their opinion equally and have equal right to get comprehensive explanation in order to decide the future of Boti indigenous village.

### **Biarchy as The Social System**

Gender concept is certain characteristics which are categorized to men and women constructed by social and cultural (Fakih, 2008: 8). Those certain characteristics constructed by social and cultural are recognized as stereotype. Furthermore, on the same page, Fakih explains how to catch the gender applied is by checking whether those characteristics are changeable between men and women. Means, if one activity is usually done by men and become stereotype as man character then can be done by women too, that characteristic is called gender. For instance, crying is generally identified women act. Actually, men can be cried too. So the identification of crying as women act is a gender. Nowadays, it is very rare to find certain job or act can be done based on gender for global or international policy. However, gender is still happened in the small or certain community and daily life.

Gender is behavioral differences between men and women which are constructed by social through long term social and cultural processes (Fakih, 2008: 75). These two constructions on gender then result gender inequalities, such as: marginalization, subordination and worst gender related violence (2008: 13-18). Those gender inequalities are happened regularly and commonly un-considered as part of the construction and supported by norms, values and rules, including religion dogmas. Therefore, there are women movement and feminism movement. Feminism essentially is struggle for equality, dignity and freedom to control body and live, inside and outside of home (Fakih, 2008: 83). While women movement is women transformation movement, that is a process of movement to create the relation on human beings which are fundamentally new, better and more equal (Fakih, 2008: 172). Women transformation gender is more on the movement of freedom for women and men from injustice system (Fakih, 2008: 173).

By involving in Boti daily live, all job division is always based on the competence of each person as well as the interest. It is stated clearly to answer various question about the reason of jobs division and doing certain works. They never explain physical and emotional condition of men and women as the basis to determine the jobs division and doing the works. There is the tendency certain works are done by certain gender, but not restricted. Weaving is one job which is done by women. As equal job, the *Poe Pah*<sup>26</sup> ritual is done by men. While cooking, cleaning, washing, works at the field, feeding the stocks, meeting the guess, taking care businesses and trading, discussing the live and future of Boti can be done by both men and women. Women are able to express their voices in all fields of live including politic. The clear example is in the order of eating together for gathering or party and daily life. The first who pleases to eat is the guesses, women and men. After that, children and kids. Finally, the elder and youth, women and men. This order is different with other indigenous community or common community in Timor island which are generally placed men or fathers as the first, then women and youth.

Fakih's theory detects the injustice system; social and cultural construction; as the cause of gender inequalities. So, women movement is not fighting men domination by applying women domination. Women movement would be more effective not merely done by women, but better involving men. Because gender inequalities are constructed by social and cultural, both women and men should get critical consideration about gender. Gender transformation is the liberation efforts from all kind of oppression structurally and personally by class, color of skin and international economic (Fakih, 2008: 173). Gender transformation must process the deletion or evasion all forms of inequalities, oppression, domination and discrimination: as the interrelated forms, which comprise the relation on economic, social, cultural, ideology, environment and including the relationship between men and women (Fakih,

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<sup>26</sup> *Poe Pah* is the harvest thanksgiving ritual which is regularly done in April before reap all the crops. They pray and give offering of stocks such as: goat, cow, pigs, corns, vegetables then eat together. This ceremony is held more than one day, can be 2-3 days, at their customary forest.

2008: 173). Thus, the goal of gender movement is the equality of women and men whose dignity and freedom on their body and live. In other word, the goal of gender movement is gender equality in all fields of live.

Based on these explanations about gender, it can be concluded, as ever mentioned above, Boti indigenous community implements gender equality in their daily live and every field of live; economic, social, politic, cultural, religion and environment. The foundation of gender equality in Boti is no differentiation based on gender. All works in all fields of live can be done based on the abilities of the person/s who would like to accomplish it. And, all fields of works can be accomplished by women and men. No fields of works are divided based on gender. All are done by abilities and interest. The implication of that foundation is no rules set based on gender, not even positioning certain gender, especially women, lower than other, men. Women and men have equal chances and opportunities. Women and men are able to made the decision, voice their ideas and being well protected by social system. Boti indigenous community actually already implements the equality gender which is struggle by contemporary people. Moreover, gender equality becomes the social system in Boti and applied in their daily live.

All of those are the original knowledge of Boti indigenous community. They learned those from their ancestors and further they teach to next generation. Boti indigenous community constructed their authentic knowledges about gender equality. By this strong construction which is also taught to youth, the implementation of gender equality can be sustained though modernization and other religions than Nusantara Religion which have different norms, values, dogmas get into Boti. Boti indigenous community capable to absorb new matters from modernization and other religions without destroying and changing the essential foundation of their social and cultural construction. No wonder, even in the modern fields of works, such as government, health service, state education, trading, and worship activities of non-Nusantara Religions gender equality is still implemented. This social and cultural construction blend in personal construction, systematized and descended through education. There is a simultaneous interconnection between social and cultural construction with personal construction as mindset and principal perspective. Next, systematization and education become the tools and media to strengthening and sustain the foundation of gender equality of Boti indigenous community. Their systematization which placed women equal to men is then identified as biarchy, the power in role division and decision maker in all parts of live hold by women and men equally. While their education is named as cultural education<sup>27</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

Boti indigenous community actually already has implemented gender equality as their social system based on their ancestors taught. It is part of their culture and applied in their daily live. This system enables both men and women to involve actively in all aspects of life, give positive contribution in order to promote their village and voice their ideas. This system also protects both genders as an individual to live with their own choices. The main thing is both women and men have equal right and power to decide their own live and respect equally. Boti which is an indigenous community is obviously a contemporary community in gender equality system.

Gender equality is also the social and cultural construction as gender inequality. It should be considered to become personal construction as simultaneous interconnection. By this interconnection, gender equality should be systemized and educated in order to strengthening and sustain it. Finally, gender equality becomes the daily live as unseparated part of the society. It becomes the inner side which implement automatically and very possible without any conscious.

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<sup>27</sup> Cultural education is the way of Boti indigenous community to identify the non-state education for children in order to teach their original and authentic knowledges as their ancestors taught through daily live activities in home, fields and society.

Gender equality concept is not new concept, actually. Boti indigenous community that's categorized as traditional society is already implemented it and placed it as their ancestors taught. They might not tell the gender equality knowledge in a scientific formulation. Moreover, they might be not considered it. But they already have that knowledge, implement it in their daily live with certain systematization, named Biarchy, and continue by teaching those to next generation with their authentic way of education, called education of cultural.

### **End Notes**

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